

himalayan **TIMES**

THE VOICE OF KALIMPONG

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KALIMPONG

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Recalling
Kalimpong
BY DR. S.B. WANGYEL
PAGE 14

THE
YAKHAS OF
THE
HIMALAYAS
By Sailendra Dewan
PAGE 18

SELECT YOUR PET
By Dr. D.P. Pandey
PAGE 15



Beew Bhaley BY SAMSER ALI



RECALLING THE TRADE ROUTE BY VIMAL KHAWAS



MY DATE WITH LADY MOUNT BATTEN BY HARKA DIYALI

The Under-19 DGHC Girls Football Team that won the West Bengal Girls Football Tournament this year was given a hero's welcome here on the 14 of September.

Of the sixteen girls that were part of the Under 19 DGHC team, seven have been chosen to represent the Bengal team that will play in the national level tournament which will be held at Guwahati on the first week of December this year.

The welcome ceremony organized by the DGHC Kalimpong School Sports and Co-Curriculum Activity Association (KSSCAA) started around one in the afternoon where students and teachers of different schools and DGHC councilors of Kalimpong escorted them in a rally from 8 mile. The rally, which was led by a school band, ended in the premises of the Scottish University Mission

Institution (SUMI) where a congratulation and welcome speech along with a dance program was held.

In the congratulation and welcome speech the KSSCAA secretary N.R. Pradhan said, "This DGHC girls football team has made history by winning the state level under 19 Girls Football tournament. Last year the DGHC under 19 girls team had

Pariyar said, "We are happy that we managed to win the other team. Now the seven girls who have been chosen to represent the state will be go for training at Calcutta on November 2nd after which they will go to the national tournament which will be held at Guwahati."

Fifteen-year-old Emelda Lepcha of St. George School of Pedong said, "The competition was tough with the opponent team having a strong defense. However, we managed to win and it does feel good that we did this representing the DGHC team." Lepcha is one of the team players who participated in the state level Under-19 Girls Football Tournament. She is also amongst the seven that have been chosen to represent the state in the national level.

Speaking about her being chosen in the state team Lepcha said, "Everyone in the team is a good player and it came as a surprise that I was also chosen for the state team. It feels good and we will give it our best shot in the national level."

The other girls that have been chosen to represent the state team are Suzan Sherpa, Eden Bhutia, Sancha Kumari Tamang, Elizabeth Dewan, Marian Bhutia and Prina Gurung.

managed to be the runners up in the state level and this year they have made us proud."

The West Bengal Girls Football Tournament final was held at Dinhatta on September 12 where the DGHC Girls under 19-football team won the team of 24-Pragnas by 2 nil.

Speaking to himalayan Times the coach of the team Pranav



Members of the Team

Editorial

It seems we in the Hills will never learn- we are well informed and have in-depth understanding of the blunders that the rest of the country is committing and we talk about the same and criticize these mistakes squarely. But the moment we turn around- we fall into the same trap.

We have seen what Mandalization of the society has and is doing to the country. We tore V.P.Singh's casteist policies to bits and blamed him for all the bloodshed and hatred his "divide & rule" policy fanned through out the country. Its another matter that he could not rule but divide he surly did.

At that time when the rest of country was burning, the Hills were probably one of the most sober and sane places in India.

Now, after about a decade and a half, we like tube lights, are belatedly trying to hitch on to the runaway Mandal train. We in the Hills for whom unity was one of the biggest strengths, now seem hell bent in fracturing this very strength of ours. We now very seldom seem to think as a single community but rather can hardly seem to think beyond the community that we belong to. Only on very rare occasions are we Gorkhas now- we now tend to identify ourselves more as Lepchas or Tamangs or Rais or Limbus or whatever whatever. It seems we are setting a course for a future where petty caste or creed or religious politics would replace the politics of unity and harmony that has till recently been our strength and forte. How else can we explain the fact that last Sunday i.e. on the 12th of September 2004, five different communities held separate meeting in five different locations of the town???

Wouldn't it have been better if all of them and all the rest had got together and met at Mela Ground to discuss the fate and wellbeing of the entire Gorkha community???

**DO YOU HAVE ANY THING THAT
YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE
REST OF KALIMPONG ???**

HAVE YOUR SAY AT

YOUR PAGE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Mr. Bhanu Baral has once again by his thought provoking article "Mobile Manners", highlighted the menace that cell phones have become in the present times. He has very rightly said that Mobiles are a good servant but a bad master.

I came to realize this only after my two sons got themselves a mobile phone each. Now it seems that they cannot live without it !!!

I hope that after reading the above mentioned article by Mr. Baral, cell phone users of the town will learn a little bit of Mobile Manners.

Mr. Suren Khati
Rellie Road

Dear Sir,

This letter is with reference to the article "Furore over Kohli" by Mr. Jacob Shen in your last issue.

In the aftermath of the Kohli episode, all newspapers, magazines as well as the electronic media were full of the Kohli affair- infact there was a deluge of news on this topic and for a short time we the casual readers had a over dose of the entire episode. Every aspect of the unfortunate incident was analyzed and discussed but still I felt that there was something amiss. Jacob Shen's article I felt was a very comprehensive one on the topic and he seems to have covered every aspect of the entire story.

My congratulations to you and Jacob Shen for the above referred article.

Thanking You,
Nayan Sundas
Tong Soong
Darjeeling

Sisterly love for brother tree

By Staff Correspondent

The students of Clunny Women's College have come out with an extremely innovative and noble way of showing concern for the ongoing destruction of our forests.

On Rahshabandan Day, students of Clunny Women's College, the only all girls college in the town, showed their extreme concern for the random, exploitation of our forests by tying threads on trees. On this day, Hindu girls tie threads on their brother's wrists, praying for their well being and long life. In other words, the students of this college have forged a new relationship the trees- this symbolic act now calls for brotherly love for our trees.

Speaking to Himalayan times Sister Sophie Rai of Clunny College say, "This is a way are showing our concern for

the destruction of our forests. This is the third year that this programme is being held and we hope that by this act we can draw the attention to the deforestation in our region."

This programme was an initiative of the Clunny Eco Friendly Movement (LEFM), which is a nature club within the college.

Miss Deo Maya Rai a students year of the college says, "We at Clunny College feel highly concerned at the wonton felling of trees as well as destruction of our forests. By this act we hope to spread awareness about this grave problem that faces us. We have vowed to protect trees as we would protect and care for our brothers."



FUTURE OF KALIMPONG

MASTER ISHAN DIXHIT

DATE OF BIRTH 18TH FEB 2004



Sir, When you were a student, did you always get 90% like you expect us to get????

FLOWERS FINALLY BLOSSOM IN HEART OF TOWN

By Staff Correspondent

An old Sanskrit saying goes something like this "there is always a shortage of water in the water carriers home". This holds true in Kalimpong too- Kalimpong which is world renowned for its flowers actually has to spend time looking for flowers if and when it requires it. Finally the town may find it easier to quench its thirsts for cut flowers, bouques & flower garlands with the opening of the first exclusive flower shop in Kalimpong.

Seeing the demand for flowers amongst the locals, Mrs. Shela Pradhan of Standard Nursery has opened an exclusive flowers shop in Kalimpong. "Blossom", the name of the shop, is located at the Ma Super Market complex. Exotic cut flowers like Anthuriums, Gladioli, Asto Maria & Cally can now readily

be brought over the counter here. Besides these Cattleya which is known as the Queen of Orchids, a variety of Ferns and Foliage plants are also available here.



A variety of flowers at the shop

Says Mr. Mona Moktan who manages the store, "Besides locally available plants and flowers, we also procure flowers from Gangtok and

others nearby places though most of the flowers & plants sold in this outlet is grown in our own nursery. "She further says, "We are still selling Azaleas in this season although the season for the locally grown Azaleas has long ended. This variety of Azaleas that we are selling at the present is of Belgian variety. Gerberas of several varieties including from Holland are available with us."

Besides cut flowers and plants the outlet also makes available to flowers lovers bouques, wreaths and garlands. Bouques ranging from Rs.50/- to Rs.300/- are available at all times in the shop. "The various varieties of Chinese Bamboos, Dwarfs and bushy plants are in big demand with the Bengali tourists", says Moktan.

FOOD FESTIVAL TO BE HELD

Good news for the food lovers of the region - its Razzmatazz time once again.

Razzmatazz - the one of its kind food festival is being held at Kalimpong Town Hall on the 19th of September. Organized by the Good Shepherd Institute of Hospitality Management (GSIHM), this festival was held for the first

time in November last year and was a big hit amongst the locals.

The organizers have planned a much bigger and more extravagant festival this time around. It is expected that almost 125 different food items will be prepared this year - almost 40 items more than the previous year. As per the organizers - this year emphasis will be given to

local cuisines. Food lovers would be able to enjoy a variety of Bhutanese, Tibetan, Lepcha and Gorkha food. Besides this Sea Food, Marawari, Tandori and mouth watering variety of others dishes can also be enjoyed at the festival. Says Mr. Alvin Lama, Director of GSIHM, and the brain behind the festival. "After the tremendous response that the festival received last year from lover of good food of the

region, this year's festival will be bigger and better."

Giving more details on the festival Lama says, "For the entertainment of the visitors to the festival, we have planned some very exciting musical shows which will take place while the food fest is in progress. We are sure it will live up to its name "razzmatazz" which means to "razzal and the dazzle".

It is learnt that "Acoustica" a popular musical band from Darjeeling and a Gazzal group from Siliguri are being invited to perform at the festival. An ethnic Nepali dance group from Nepal is also expected to perform for the entertainment of the guests.

With mouth watering food and music to match - it is expected that all roads in Kalimpong will lead to Town Hall on the 19th of September.



File Photo of the Food Fest Last Year

INAUGURATION OF COMPUTERIZED MUKHYA DAK GHAR

By Anup Moktan

In a historic day for Kalimpong Postal Services, the Computerized Mukhya Dak Ghar was inaugurated by Mr. Jhon Samuel, the Postmaster General of North Bengal and Sikkim, on 6th of September. The inauguration was part of the Kalimpong Post Office Festival which was held for two days.

Kalimpong, it may be recalled, had a combined Sub-Office (CSO) before, but it has now been accorded the status of a Mukhya Dak Ghar (head post office) with fully computerized infrastructure. Incidentally Kalimpong Post Office is the first to be fully computerized in the district.

To commemorate the event, Kalimpong Post Office had organized a function at the Town Hall on the 6th of September. Musical shows were presented by various schools of

Kalimpong in the function. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Dawa Pakhrin, the Chief Guest, thanked the Postmaster General for the achievement. "It is a milestone in the history of Kalimpong Post Office and the people of Kalimpong will surely benefit from the computerization and upgradation of the same," he said.



Apart from the upgradation and modernization, new facilities like savings schemes, philately computers and a customer care cell were also included in the repertoire of the post office.

According to Mr. John Samuel Kalimpong will also have flower and cardamom post services, "Kalimpong is famous world wide for flowers. Now people can send flowers not only in India but also to foreign cities like Amsterdam. Infact we have tied up with the Airlines and people

concerned in Amsterdam to export flowers out there," said Mr. Samuel. Similarly people will also be able to export cardamom from the post office," A person wishing to buy Kalimpong cardamom can order for cardamom packets through the Internet," he added.



He presented the award for highest growing post office in the region to Kalimpong post office. Several employees of the post office were also felicitated for their outstanding performance.

A philately exhibition and an inter-school quiz competition was also held at the Centenary Hall of Girls High School. Out of the 5 participating school in the quiz competition, St. Augustine's School won the 1st prize while Rockvale Academy and Saptashri Gyanpeeth bagged the 2nd and 3rd prizes respectively.

AIR TEL TO BE LAUNCHED BY PUJAS

Airtel is all set to invade the cell phone market in the region. It is expected that it will start operation by the end of next month.

As per Mr. Promod Chourasia of Chowrasia's who are the local agents of Airtel at Kalimpong service would be started by the end of next month, most probably before the Pujas. "Network testing and others details are being looked into at the moment and towers have been set", he informed.

In Kalimpong, three towers have been constructed, one at Delo, one at Drupin and one atop the Luxmi stores building at Main Road. It is expected that the network would be available in the entire sub - division though Pedong would have to wait till the tower at Rissium (6km from Algarah) is ready. Chowrasia also claimed that Airtel would provided network coverage in the entire Sliguri - Kalimpong highway.

It is expected that existing will phone service providers in the region like Reliance and BSNL would be given a good run for their money once Airtel starts operations here. The subscribers on the other hand look forward and availing quality service which the existing operators sadly have not been able to provide till date.



**Airtel tower above
Luxmi Stores**

Better road connectivity to people

By Reza Pradhan

Core December and people living in places like Girdabaling, Kaffer, Deorali and even Singe, Loleygoan, Samalbung and Santhar will get better connectivity to Kalimpong with new roads expected to be opened by then.

The construction of the 15 km road stretch from Pellie to Deorali and another 20 km road stretch from Pellie to Singe is being constructed by the DGHC Special Department with the funds received from the central government under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF).

"We are about to finish both the road stretch and it will be completed by December this year. After we finish the Pellie to Deorali road stretch which we are making it will benefit the people of Girdabaling, Kaffer, Lava and also Deorali by giving them better connectivity to Kalimpong. We will be saving almost 30 km of road stretch," said Anil Chettri, Assistant Engineer of Kalimpong sub division DGHC Special department, which is undertaking RIDF and the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sarak Yojna projects, funded by the central government.

Earlier the distance from Kalimpong to Deorali via Kaffer stood at 55km. Once the new road to Deorali via Pellie is completed the distance between Kalimpong will be only 25 km.

The road stretch, which is being constructed from Deorali to Pellie, had started way back by the DGHC Emergency Construction Cell.

After completion of about 7 km of stretch the project had stopped in 1998 due to lack of funds. In the year 2002 the DGHC Special Department had again took up this project.

Speaking about the Pellie to Singe road, Chettri said, "The construction of this road started last year. Once completed it will benefit people of Singe, Loleygoan, Samalbung and Santhar, as it will give them better connectivity to Kalimpong. We will be saving almost 53 km once this road stretch is completed."

The route from Kalimpong to Singe via Kaffer now stands at 85 km. After this new road stretch is completed the distance from Kalimpong to Singe via Pala will be only 32 km.

"Once both the road are completed it will prove to be very beneficial for the local people there as it will give them better connectivity to town. Due to the huge distance of these places from Kalimpong the local people there faced a lot of problems especially in case of ill health, as bringing him/her to Kalimpong was a problem," said Chettri. "Moreover, the same problem persisted as all the administrative offices of those places are in the town area and due to most of the local people being farmers they have to come and sell their produce in town. Not only is it time consuming but it also proves expensive to them. After the new road stretch are open it will solve such problems for them," said Chettri also adding that better connectivity of these places will also prove helpful to tourists.

**ALL YOUR ARTICLES , POEMS,
SUGGESTIONS & THOUGHTS
CAN BE SENT TO-**

THE EDITOR

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C/O HIMALAYAN TIMES
MAIN ROAD
KALIMPONG**

OR YOU MAY E-MAIL US AT

himalayantimes@rediffmail.com



KALIMPONG SPEAKS!!!!!!

LAST ISSUES QUESTION-

Is Kalimpong spending too much money each year in the name of Independence Day??

Out of the 76 respondent, 48 thinks that Kalimpong should exercise a little bit more caution in spending so much money on Independence Day while 28 responses received think that the money spent on Independence Day is just a token of the love that we have for the country.



Yes 63%

No 37 %

This issues question is -

Should Kalimpong have a computerized Railway Reservation Office???

Answer in Yes or No by 27th of September 2004 and sent it to us at

KALIMPONG SPEAKS

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Workshop On Journalism At Kalimpong College

By Anup Moktan

A first of its kind Workshop on Journalism was held at Kalimpong College on the 31st of August. The Workshop organized by the Department of English, Kalimpong College, was an eye-opener for the students on the pros and cons of journalism. Prominent journalists from the region were present as Resource Persons in the Workshop. Among them, Reza Pradhan from the Telegraph, and Niraj Lama from the Statesman were present. The students of Elective English and English Honours attended the Workshop. English Honours students from Clunny Womens College were also present.

According to Ms Anukampa Subba, Head of Department of English, Kalimpong College, Journalism is in the Elective English Paper I syllabus of the College Curriculum. She said, "Though the topic was already discussed in the class, the student were hearing it directly from professionals for the first time. I requested Mr. Reza and Mr. Niraj over the phone and they were kind enough to share their expertise with the students". She added that the college was also contemplating an Inter-Departmental Seminar after which there was the National-Level Seminar sponsored by the UGS.

In the first part of the Workshop, the Resource person spoke at length on journalism and editing. It was followed by the second part where they were bombarded with questions by the attending students.

Speaking to Himalayans Times, Mr. Niraj Lama, who is the correspondents of the Statesman from Darjeeling and is regarded as one of the finest in this field in the region, said, "It is a learning experience for the students as they will be interacting with professionals for the first time. This workshop would encourage students to take up journalism as a career."

Telephone woes at

By Anup Moktan

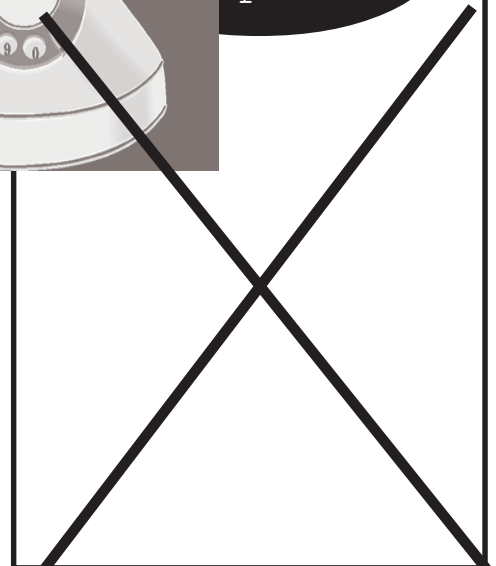
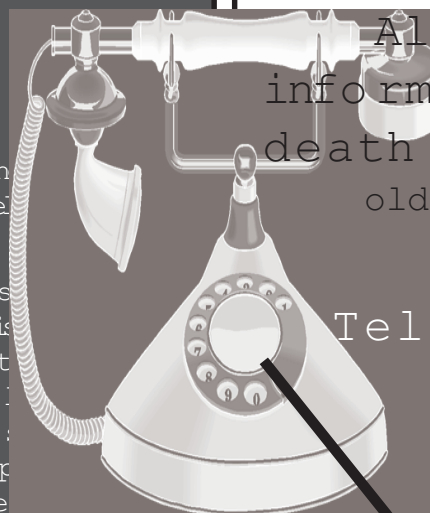
When telephone first came to Kāfīr, everyone's lives would change. But contrary to their belief, still remains the same.

The local Telephone Exchange has been out of service since with the repair work a too a distant dream. However this time that the telephones have stopped working. Infact telephone lines have been dead for only a month, but telephones were dead for almost six month! This just a negligence of the concerned authorities. The bills are paid but repair work is done late and it takes months for the telephones to come back to life.

Kāfīr, a well known tourist spot attracts a large population of tourists. Most of the people depend on tourism to make both ends meet. However the telephone fiasco is adversely affecting their business. "I have to keep in touch with my agent in Kolkata but these phones are not working," said a visibly-infuriated hotel owner. "I have to depend on these phones to confirm the booking," he added.

"Why should we pay the bills for these phones which do not work?" echoed another man.

All are informed of the death of our dear old friend the Telephone



Recalling the Road to Lhasa from Kalimpong

By Vimal Khawas

The recent publication of the official maps by China shows Sikkim as part of India. The recognition of Sikkim by the Chinese Government almost 25 years since this small Himalayan Kingdom became a part of the Republic of India has thrown before us tremendous challenges and opportunities. The reason why China came up with such decision after 25 years and why not in 1975 itself is a matter of varied historical perceptions and high level of geo-politics between India and China that is beyond the scope of this write up to examine. However, having come to a broad mutual understanding on Sikkim and Tibet last year when the then Prime Minister of India Shri Atal Behari Bajpai visited China, India and China are now poised to move away from the sterile geo-politics of the past to a new emphasis on geo-economics.

In this connection we have been repeatedly talking about the reopening of the old (silk) trade route from Nathula Pass in Sikkim through Lhasa to the Chinese market, tourism across Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet/China, and future development prospects of the state of Sikkim. Opening up of the Himalayas for trade and tourism will lead to rapid economic

development on both sides of the border and reconnect economic and cultural spaces that were torn asunder by the Sino-Indian hostility. There have been serious discourses on the up gradation of the present Jawaharlal Nehru Marg between Gangtok and Nathu La to facilitate the commercial traffic. An expert committee has been set up by the Government of Sikkim in this respect consisting of senior civil servants and academicians headed by a well-known economist and professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Dr. Mahendra P. Lama who is also incidentally the chief economic advisor to the Chief Minister of Sikkim.



We however, have failed to bring in the national policy discourses the old trade links between Kalimpong and Lhasa in Tibet through Jelep La. This historic trade route between Kalimpong and Lhasa was responsible for building Kalimpong as one of the most prominent trade centers of Indian and Tibetan goods and raw materials till the early 1960s when the route was unexpectedly closed following the Sino-Indian war. In fact, the emergence of the present Kalimpong Town to its present status can in many ways be attributed to the trade links between Lhasa-Kalimpong-Calcutta and vice versa. In other words, Kalimpong flourished as a trade center of Indian and Tibetan/Chinese goods. The frequent Tibetan Inscriptions on the rocks along the Kalimpong-

Jelep La-Lhasa route is believed to be the route mark for the travelers and traders so that they would not lose their way.

A selective linear survey of the elderly Marwari and Tibetan traders along the R.C. Mintri Road and Relli Road highlight that almost all the basic goods and raw materials like clothes, shoes (Tibetan boots), spices, sweets, watches, candles, cottons etc were traded from Kalimpong to

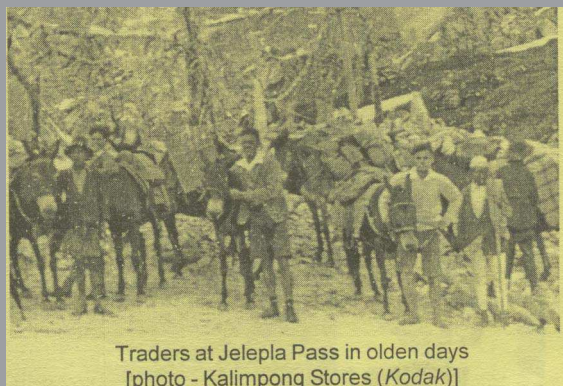
Lhasa. Further, a traditional Tibetan dress locally called *Bakhu* and its associates like *Chuba* and *Pangde* were tailored in Kalimpong and transported to Lhasa. From Lhasa, raw materials like wool of the sheep, crude silver and gold were brought to the market in Kalimpong. Mr. Satya Narayan Agarwal, aged 75 years old, still vividly remembers how he as a young retailer used to sell clothes and other semi-finished textiles to the Tibetan counterparts during the 1950s. In those days there were hardly any vehicles in Kalimpong. Hundreds of ponies used to trek down from Lhasa via Jelep La to Kalimpong and vice versa. Sitaram Chawrasia, aged 63 years, of Bagdhara Road profoundly recalls how he as a young boy enjoyed

the dances of the Tibetan traders while they brought hundreds of thirsty ponies to Bagdhara to feed them water. Mr. D. S. Khawas of Suruk Dong Busty, aged 66 years, is still to forget those days of late 1950s when he as a teenager used to witness hundreds of ponies in and around Bagdhara while he visited Kalimpong Bazar with his family elders during week days.

Survey also highlights that most of the people including traders in Kalimpong have no knowledge about the reopening of the border through Nathu La. When this writer informed the old Marwari and Tibetan traders about the recent talk of the Government of India and the excitement and enthusiasm of Sikkim particularly the Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling to reopen the old silk route of Gangtok-Nathu La-Lhasa they pointed out that the trade route of Kalimpong-Jelep La-Lhasa is easier, shorter and smoother than the former. Moreover, they recalled that the latter route was more important during the pre-revolution days than the former

with larger volume of goods and raw materials and the corresponding traders finding their place through Kalimpong-Jelep La-Lhasa route.

It is, however, something uncanny that Kalimpong has not found place in the national and



Traders at Jelep La Pass in olden days
[photo - Kalimpong Stores (Kodak)]

regional policy discourses as a major trade center of Lhasa till the early 1960s and that the resumption of the trade between China/Tibet and India (Sikkim) should also benefit Kalimpong and its surrounding. Besides, Kalimpong and its surrounding hills are not less picturesque than the Sikkim Himalaya. Kalimpong hills have tremendous tourism potential particu-

larly nature tourism if it is properly planned and rationally structured.

It is high time that the leaders of Darjeeling Hills, activists, academicians and the general public deliberate on the above discussed issue and demand the recognition of Kalimpong in the policy debate as a historic trade center with strong trade link with Lhasa (Tibet) and that the reopening of the boarder for trade and other economic activities mainly tourism need also to be considered via Kalimpong-Jelep La as Kalimpong along with its counterparts Darjeeling and Kurseong Hills also deserve to benefit the fruits of the audacious venture of the Government of India equally

as that of Sikkim. Further, opening up of the Jelep La would check the commercial load to the carrying capacity of Nathu La and it's surrounding and hence would share environmental fall-outs due to heavy human and vehicular traffic in the region.

REUNION MEET FOR COLLEGE ALUMINI

The Kalimpong College Ex-Students Association has decided to organize a Reunion for its ex-students. The programme, a first of its kind in the 42 year old history of Kalimpong College will be held on the 3rd of October 2004.

Giving information on the same Dr. R.K.Dhakal, Principal of the college as well as the President of the associations says, "This is the first step towards fostering a closer relationship between the Alma Matter and its old students. We

hope to organize more such programmes in future so that interaction between the ex-students, present students and the College increases."

As per information provided by the Secretary of the association Mr. Sitaram Kafley, a reunion meet will be held on that day along with cultural programmes which will be staged by the present College students. This will be followed by the Reunion Lunch and the AGM of the association. "A new executive

body to take charge of the association will be elected on this day", informed Kafley.

Dr. Dhakal has invited all ex-students of the College to take part in this programme.

